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Americans' Foreign Language Deficit and Possible Solutions

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AMERICANS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEFICIT AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS



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With the rise of globalism, Americans are recognizing the need to converse with other nations – and their inability to do so. The remedy to this predicament is to increase foreign language learning in the United States and to do so in a way that is effective enough to allow students of that language to achieve either proficiency or fluency in the language. This paper aims to describe the advantages of learning a foreign language, explain how Americans are falling behind, identify the different methods that have been employed to teach a foreign language and in the end, give a prescription regarding how Americans should go about learning foreign languages in the future.

Introduction/Description of This Paper

Over the past decades, the United States has been determined to the best of the best, a superpower, singular in its world, dominating the world through its political, military and economic power. However, the country, and therefore its citizens, has fallen behind on one key element which is necessary for operating in this highly globalized world, which is the knowledge of and proficiency in foreign languages. Without mastering important language skills, political, military and economic power falter and are less effective than they could have been had Americans known how to speak the tongues of those who they are trying to interact with. To the outside world (and even to minorities within the country), Americans have developed this negative reputation for being xenophobic, anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, and arrogant toward and ignorant of other cultures and people. This spells trouble for their standing in the international community. Considering this, Americans need to drastically change their foreign language deficit.

How do they do this? First, people need to understand why learning a foreign language is important. Second, they must recognize their deficiencies in this area, especially those in comparison to other populations. Then, the most effective method that can be accessible to the most people must be determined. There are many ways to learn a foreign language; learning and speaking it at home, intense summer courses at universities, travel and prolonged visits to foreign countries, etc. However, for purposes of this paper, the main concern is how to best learn foreign languages in school, as all Americans spend a great amount of time there. For this reason, two methods of learning a foreign language will be examined: “book method” and “immersion method.” Book method is the dominant of the two practices, where students go to class a couple times a week, do work from a book and can generally speak in both the target language and their native language. The immersion method is more intense, requiring much more time spent in the target language and employing different methods of teaching.

Both methods were observed in classes on La Salle University’s campus; the book method was observed in traditional classrooms in the university’s day programs and the immersion method was observed in the university’s English Language Institute. Later in the paper, the methods, instruction and atmospheres of both book and immersion method will be described (from the classroom observations) and a description of the students’ progress and abilities in the target language will also be given. Students of each observed class were also given short surveys so they themselves could assess and describe how they perceived their language learning to be going. From the observations and surveys, it will be determined which method is more effective for teaching foreign languages in schools and suggestions will be given as to how to implement the most effective methods so that Americans are no longer

behind their foreign counterparts in regards to knowledge, proficiency and fluency in foreign languages.

Why Is Learning a Foreign Language Important?

There are many reasons as to why Americans should be learning foreign languages. The top reasons are that knowledge of and proficiency in at least one foreign language will allow Americans to compete in the global economy, develop better cognitive skills, improve other areas of academic work and cultivate a better understanding of other people and cultures around the world. Not everyone will need to use a foreign language for all of the aforementioned reasons, however, everyone could benefit from at least one and the evidence showing how a foreign language aids in these areas should be given consideration when thinking about the necessity of Americans learning a foreign language.

Today, business and culture is becoming more globalized than ever, with connections all around the world. With this in mind, many are starting to believe that learning a foreign language should have a higher national priority, especially because the lack of foreign language knowledge is an issue that is particularly present in English speaking countries. There's a reason for this; for centuries, English was the language of the international community and the language was vital to know for business, traveling, etc. However, times are changing. English is no longer the all-important language that it used to be and leaves monolingual English-speakers at a loss in the ever-growing globalized world. The fact is, only 10% of native-born US citizens reported that they felt comfortable enough to converse in another language, compared to 53% of Europeans who feel they can converse in a second language (Advocates Seek More, 2013).

That is a big difference and it's being felt here at home. At a conference hosted by the University of Maryland College Park, educators, researchers, business leaders and representatives from federal and state governments all highlighted the need for multilingual employees, due to their increasing work within the global economy, and the difficulty to meet this need. As one executive put it, employers are discovering a talent gap in this nation, where companies are looking for employees with language skills, yet there is a lack of this in the workforce. A while back, Britain, another predominantly English-speaking country, recognized that the majority of its society was monolingual and saw that this was creating setbacks for itself and its people. In an effort to combat this, the British government developed a national campaign that encouraged all Britons to learn at least 1,000 words of another language, therefore making its people more functional in matters dealing with other countries and people. Similar campaigns have been created in the US by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in order to convey the importance of language learning, specifically to students and their parents. As ACTFL's executive director, Martha Abbott, explains it, learning foreign languages is most important to someone's future because it opens up career opportunities and enhances engagement with the rest of the world (Advocates Seek More, 2013).

Perhaps not everyone is seeking a career that would require them to work in other regions of the world or with people who speak another language; still, there are numerous other areas where a someone could stand to gain personal benefit from learning a foreign language. One of these areas is in cognitive abilities. A multitude of studies have been conducted, all comparing either monolingual students not learning a foreign language and

monolingual students learning a foreign language or monolingual and bilingual students. When comparing students who had some (about 30 minutes) of daily instruction in a foreign language to students who had no such education, students with minimal foreign language schooling still showed differences in cognitive abilities. In a study done by Foster, students with some foreign language education scored better on tasks involving evaluation, which is the highest cognitive skill. This study went on to show that the more foreign language education a student had, the better they performed. Other studies showed that students who had some foreign language knowledge could better think outside the box, departing from traditional approaches to problem solving, and scored higher on tests relating to picture arrangement and object assembly (References for Cognitive). Researching the effects short foreign language instruction is important because it proves that one does not have to be fluent or even proficient in a foreign language to gain the cognitive benefits of foreign language learning; effects begin after only a few months of instruction.

Studies of monolinguals and bilinguals showed other, yet similar results. Studies conducted by Ben-Zeev have shown that despite socio-economic background and upbringing, when compared to monolingual students, bilingual students constantly show more advanced cognitive processing in verbal tasks and have more strategies to process verbal material. Similarly, a study by Rodriguez also found that bilingual children seem to have more strategies at their disposal when solving problems; this study showed that bilingual children used higher order rules of cognition more frequently than monolingual children, suggesting that bilingualism helps with concept formation and general mental flexibility. Another study by Hakuta found that bilingual children have better abilities when it comes to thinking abstractly

about language and thinking nonverbally. A study by Ricciardelli discovered that when tested in these areas, students who are bilingual score higher on creativity, metalinguistic awareness and reading achievements tests (References for Cognitive).

While what these studies show is related to abstract cognitive abilities that most people do not think about on a regular basis, they translate into real life results that can be recognized and appreciated. The first positive aspect that comes from enhanced cognitive abilities that can be easily noticed in everyday life is memory skills in children. With the knowledge that bilingualism positively effects cognitive abilities, one researcher, Kormi, tested monolingual and bilingual students from ages 7 to 13 on episodic (subject-performed and verbal tasks with free and cued recall) and semantic (fluency tests) memory. Bilingual students performed better on both the episodic and semantic memory tests. Noticing that bilingual children have more effective controlled cognitive processing that leads to better memory skills, another researcher, Bialystok, had the hypothesis that perhaps two competing languages enhances executive cognitive functions so much that it creates advantages that continue into older age. After multiple studies were conducted with monolinguals and bilinguals who were of older age, it showed that bilingual adults responded more rapidly to conditions that placed greater demands on working memory. This results mean that controlled cognitive processing continues into older age and could off-set age-related losses in certain executive processes (Reference for Cognitive). The discoveries of bilingualism's positive relation to memory skills and age-related cognitive skills are extremely important, especially today when people are living longer yet frequently suffering from diseases like Dementia and Alzheimer's.

Maybe information discussing enhanced abstract cognitive abilities and studies showing that bilingualism could help memory skills in people's later years are not enough to convince people (students, parents, administrators, etc). that foreign languages are necessary to learn today. Luckily, there is evidence that shows that learning a foreign language has more immediate and tangible results; it helps increase academic achievement. As seen in a wide variety of studies, increased academic achievement has been seen through general test scores (including those not related to language), reading abilities, knowledge of native language and linguistic awareness, and on the SAT and ACT standardized tests (Studies Supporting Increased).

Many studies which were looking for relationships between foreign language learning and test scores in numerous subjects have been conducted by comparing students who have short foreign language (normally Spanish or French) instruction every day and those who have had no such instruction. In a study conducted by Armstrong, it was found that elementary school students who had be given short periods of Spanish instruction a few times a week scored better than those without this instruction on both math and reading sections of the Metropolitan Achievement Test. Another researcher, Sheridan, also used results from the Metropolitan Achievement Test to ascertain that an entire year of foreign language helped improve students' word knowledge, reading, language comprehension, spelling, math computation, math concepts, math problems and social studies. This same study found that improvements, particularly in spelling, reading and math concepts, continued with second and third year enrollment in foreign language lessons. A study by Johnson found that arithmetic and English grammar scores were consistently higher for students who were in the process of learning a foreign language as compared to those who never had such study. In yet another

study, this time by Lopato, results found that students who had studied a foreign language earned much better scores on the arithmetic and spelling sections of the Stanford Achievement Test than students who had not studied a foreign language. Another study, by Kessler, aimed to see what effects bilingualism has on students' abilities to formulate scientific hypotheses or solutions to scientific questions. All students who participated were taught scientific concepts in English by the same teacher – the only educational difference was the bilingualism of half of the students. The bilingual students outperformed the others in both the quality of hypotheses and the syntactic complexity of the written language. The idea here is that the additional knowledge of another language helped students develop linguistic perspective and cognitive functioning that allowed for better scientific hypotheses to be formed (Studies Supporting Increased). All of these studies stand as proof to the fact that learning a foreign language develops skills that help students understand concepts and achieve higher test scores in subject matters that are not related to language studies.

Other studies have been focused on determining if there was a positive relationship between learning foreign language and areas related to reading abilities. One study, by Carr, aimed to see what type of study was more effective for developing knowledge in the subject of language arts. In this study, students who were in foreign language classes and advanced reading (in native language) programs were tested and their results were compared; students of foreign language study achieved significantly higher test scores in the areas of reading comprehension, language mechanics and language expression. Another study, this time by D'Angiulli, compared monolingual students and students who had been exposed to a foreign language, either at home or in school, and saw that the latter performed higher on word-

reading and spelling task than the former group. Likewise, the District of Columbia Public Schools gave tests to some of its sixth graders, half of who had Latin instruction and half who did not. Tests revealed that those who received Latin instruction achieved significantly higher scores on vocabulary, comprehension and total reading skills (Studies Supporting Increased). Together, these studies show that learning a foreign language helps increase scores in subjects related to language arts.

The benefits of foreign language learning on subjects related to language arts do not stop there; studying a foreign language can also help students better understand their own native language and linguistics of languages all together. Cunningham performed a study, which compared English-speaking students learning Spanish and English-speaking students without this education (matched for grade, sex and general abilities), in order to see the effect of foreign language learning on English vocabulary. With the results, that the Spanish learners had developed better English vocabulary, Cunningham found that the Spanish had positive transfer (cross linguistic influence) on English language vocabulary. Another researcher, Hoffenberg, carried out a study that compared students (who had been matched for previous test scores, grade levels and socioeconomic status) with some knowledge of Latin and those without this knowledge. Students with Latin instruction performed at their grade level on vocabulary, while students without performed below their grade level, leading researchers to draw the conclusion that the Latin, while not a foreign language used for global business and conversation, was effective in helping build English vocabulary. In another study, Demont found that students studying a foreign language had an enhanced awareness and control of syntactic structure of language in general and could transfer this knowledge into writing, which they

found they could do with more ease. In the writing samples, it showed that foreign language knowledge helped with grammatical judgment, correction tasks and word recognition (Studies Supporting Increased). This collection of studies show that knowledge of a foreign language not only lead to knowledge of another language, but enhanced knowledge of one's native language, which could be an advantage all throughout one's life.

The last major area, academically, that foreign language as shown to effect is on standardized tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the ACT (which originally stood for the American College Test). In one study, conducted by Cooper, it was found that students who had at least one year of foreign language study scored higher on the verbal portion of the SATs (as compared to students without this knowledge). Similarly, another researcher, Eddy, found that students with some foreign language experience/education scored better than students with no foreign language background on the SAT subject tests and on the verbal portion of the SAT general tests. Some studies have also investigated students' scores on the ACTs. Oslen found that students who had consistently studied a foreign language scored better on both English and mathematics sections, as compared to students with little to no foreign language knowledge. Another study regarding the ACT was carried out by Timpe, which took two groups into consideration: one which was considered "gifted," which was comprised of students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher, who had gone through college preparatory programs and were in the top quarter of their class, and another group who had lower academic abilities. Half of each group had studied a foreign language. In both groups, those who had studied a foreign language achieved higher scores on the ACT than those in their respective groups who did not have the same past foreign language classes, showing that regardless of academic

standing, foreign languages helped improve standardized test scores (Studies Supporting Increased).

If nothing else, learning a foreign language can increase academic achievement. Increasing this is something that is highly sought after, especially because academic achievement is used by teachers to compare students, by governments to compare school districts, colleges and universities to compare applicants and even countries to compare one another. There is proof that learning a foreign language can help to raise test scores, both on tests that apply to individual schools and standardized tests that are used for continuing studies at colleges and universities around the world and develop the mind for thinking in other ways. Even if students will never use the foreign language they studied in school for anything beyond school, it is probable that it will help them on tests that get them into college and/or gain scholarships, both of which should be very important to students, parents, and educators.

Lastly, knowing a foreign language gives a person new experiences and an understanding for people and cultures, which then can lead them to developing more positive attitudes toward the target language and those who natively speak that language. In one study, conducted by Bamford, an inventory was taken of children's attitudes about Hispanic people and culture and then introduced the students to a bilingual Spanish immersion program. After the program, researchers found a significant change in attitudes toward Hispanic people and their cultures. A study conducted by Riestra also found that those who studied Spanish looked at Spanish speakers in a more positive light, as compared to those who had no knowledge of Spanish. Another study, this time by Peal, was carried in schools in Montreal, Canada. It tested both French monolingual and French/English bilingual students and tested for attitudes toward

both French and English speakers. Both groups looked favorably on those who spoke French, while French/English bilingual students had more positive views than monolingual French students about English speakers (What the Research). This supports the idea that learning a foreign language positively changes individual perception about communities of people who speak the foreign language.

How Are American Falling Behind and Which Languages Would be Beneficial for Them to Learn?

That all being said, Americans are not learning foreign languages at the rate of citizens of other developed countries. Only 25% of Americans report that they can speak a foreign language well enough to hold a conversation in it, however, this count is not limited to those who were born in the United States, as it includes immigrants who are now Americans. Of those who could speak a second language, 55% speak Spanish, 17% speak French, and 10% speak German, which leaves 18% open for all other languages. About half of Americans report that knowing a second language and being able to converse in a foreign language is good, however, not necessary; another 30% of Americans think that it is not important at all. There are also trends regarding which Americans are more and less likely to speak a foreign language. With 43% of people 18 – 29 and only 15% of people 65 and older being able to speak a foreign language, the older the American, the less likely they can speak a foreign language. With 43% of those with post-graduate degrees and only 20% of those with high school diplomas being able to speak a foreign language, the less higher education an American has been through, the less likely they are to speak a foreign language. Though it is not a very large difference, with 33% of

those who hold liberal political views and 23% of those who hold conservative political views being able to speak a foreign language, the more conservative an American's political ideology is, the less likely they are to speak a foreign language. Also, with 40% of those in the Western region of the country, 25% of those in the Eastern region, 22% of those in the Southern region and only 19% of those in the Midwest region of the country being able to speak a foreign language, the region one lives in also plays a factor in how likely an American is to know a foreign language (McComb, 2001). As one can see, there are Americans who speak a foreign language and do so well enough that they can converse in their second language, however, many factors also contribute to Americans not knowing a foreign language.

In regards to how United States' citizens' foreign language skills stack up against their frequently compared to European counterparts, Americans appear to be falling behind. As seen from statistics collected by the European Union, the majority of students in the EU are learning English in primary school. In fact, 99 – 100% of students in Malta, Cyprus, Austria, Spain, Italy, Liechtenstein, Norway and Macedonia are learning English as a foreign language in primary school and over 90% of students in Poland, France and Croatia are learning English in primary school. Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, rates of learning Russian has fallen and rates for learning English as a foreign language in primary school in Eastern European countries is on the rise, with 69% - 82% of students in Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Slovakia (depending on the country). Luxembourg and Belgium do not start teaching English as a foreign language until secondary school, however, this is because students are learning either one or two languages (besides their native one) in primary school in these countries (Luxembourgish, German and French

in Luxembourg; Dutch and French in Belgium) (Foreign Language Learning, 2016). Whether they are learning English as a foreign language in primary school, or later in secondary school, or a language other than English, these statistics clearly show that Europeans are learning a foreign language at great rates – and they don't stop there. At least 51% of all students in the EU are learning at least two languages. Due to Luxembourg having numerous official languages, 100% of its students learn at least two languages aside from their native tongue. Likewise, almost 99% of students in Finland, Romania, Slovakia and France learn at least two foreign languages (Foreign Language Learning, 2016). As for how these statistics equate to real world abilities of European students and how it compares to foreign language skills of Americans, there is a big difference. When it comes to speaking proficiently in at least one language, aside from their native one, 54% of Europeans said they could do so. 25% of Europeans can speak proficiently in at least two other languages and 10% of Europeans can speak proficiently in at least three other languages (Nardelli, 2014). This is a big difference, considering that only 25% of Americans report being able to speak one foreign language.

Americans have fallen behind Europeans in foreign language skills because Europeans have realized how foreign languages benefit them and how necessary this type of knowledge is. They see that knowing foreign languages is important for their work, travel, economic trade and everyday life. As this is the case, learning a foreign language has been mandatory in the EU for several decades. There has also been continuous reaffirmation of this mandate over the years. In 2002, it was highly recommended that students were taught more than two languages at as early ages as possible. Also in 2008, recognizing the need for foreign language in regards to social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, sharing of knowledge, Europe's economic

competitiveness and its citizens' mobility and employability, the European Council started promoting new strategies for multilingualism (Foreign Language Learning, 2016). Since the United States does not seem to have these same values and support foreign language learning the way the European Union does, it is understandable why Americans are falling behind their European counterparts in regards to knowledge of foreign languages.

It's also important to recognize though that Americans are not the only ones with a foreign language deficit problem and monolingual dominated society; part of the issue is the fact that English is the primary language used in the United States. Numerous countries that have English as their main language are suffering from monolingualism. While Europe has impressive numbers regarding students' abilities to speak foreign languages, there is an outlier: the United Kingdom. Like statistics from the United States, only about 25% of British people think they can hold a very basic conversation in a foreign language. The foreign languages that are spoken (French, German and Spanish) and foreign languages that are not commonly spoken (Mandarin, Arabic, Japanese, Russian, etc.) are the same as those spoken and not spoken in the United States. British students are no longer learning the popular languages (French, German and Spanish) at the rates they used to and they are not learning languages with new found importance (Mandarin, Arabic, Japanese, Russian) at all. It has been reported that UK schoolchildren are less likely than students in any other European nation to speak a foreign language and that UK teens have the worst foreign language abilities in all of Europe (Paton, 2013). So part of Americans' issue, like those of the British and other English-speaking countries, is that they have been living in a world where English was the top language, where they didn't need to know other languages. However, the world is changing. The UK is

recognizing, as the US should, that confidence and complacency in knowing English needs another look. This is why the UK is starting to stress the importance of foreign languages and is starting to teach them at a younger age (Paton, 2013). Americans need to start doing the same – learning foreign languages and doing so by using effective methods.

On top of the general need to learn foreign languages proficiently, there are a few key languages that Americans should be focusing on in the coming years. Those languages are Spanish, Mandarin and Arabic. Each have their own reasons as to why they are particularly important for Americans to learn for the future, particularly tied to advantages in everyday life, trade and business, international relations and cultural understanding.

Knowledge of the Spanish language should be important to Americans in the coming years specifically because of the increase in Spanish-speakers, the language's advantage in everyday life and the understanding of the Latin and Hispanic culture that Americans would most likely gain from knowing the language. Spanish is important to everyday life in the United States; is the 2nd most spoken language in the country, with 13% of Americans speaking it at home so chances are that everyone knows someone or has come in contact with someone who speaks Spanish, perhaps only Spanish. More Americans knowing the language would be advantageous for and facilitate interactions with those who cannot speak English or cannot speak it well. Employers are recognizing this increase and are looking for employees who can speak Spanish fluently so that they have the ability to interact and work with the growing Hispanic community. As Spanish is official language of 20 countries, employers are also looking for people who can work with Latin and Hispanic communities abroad. For this reason, knowing Spanish is a very good skill to have and might just lead to employment. It's even more

important for those working in the medical, law and social work professions, as they work with diverse populations on a daily basis. On top of all that, learning Spanish can also help one's English language skills, so an investment in Spanish as a foreign language could really be an investment in bettering one's native language (Ramirez and Planas, 2015). Since the number of Spanish speakers in the US is growing, as is employers' interest in those who fluently speak Spanish, Americans should start considering investing time in and learning the Spanish language.

Knowledge of the Mandarin language should also be important to Americans in the coming years specifically because of the increase in trade and business with China and the need to have positive and effective international relations with the country. China, specifically trade with and business in China, is becoming increasingly important to the United States, thanks to Chinese economy growing astronomically, unlike any other country today. To give some perspective on how fast China is growing, it is now the world's largest exporter and it has overtaken Japan as the second largest economy in the world (2nd to the United States), though it is expected to surpass the US in the coming years. This matters because with the West still recovering from a crippling recession and China surging ahead in almost all sectors, businesses are looking to set up operations in the country and they are looking for employees that can handle this shift. This is where proficiency or fluency in Mandarin is important: if one is taking a job in China, growing a business there or working for a multinational company that does business in China (as more and more businesses are), knowing how to speak Mandarin is becoming a necessity. Knowledge of the Mandarin language is becoming a skill that employers are looking for because they want employees who have local language abilities, can travel and

work abroad and are culturally compatible, meaning that the employees understand the business mores within the context of the Chinese culture and can conduct themselves appropriately and accordingly (Lee, 2010). Due to the geographical shift in business, leading it to focus on China, Americans would be remiss if they do not start learning Mandarin; if they do not start learning this language, they would be at a disadvantage in regards to dealing with business, trade and economics.

Knowledge of the Arabic language should be important to Americans in the coming years specifically because Americans need to improve international relations in the Middle East and North Africa, and rebuild connections with Muslim and Arab citizens of the United States, which begins with a better understanding of their culture (which can be taught along with the Arabic language). As it is one of the six languages of the United Nations, the official or co-official language of 16 nations in the Middle East and North Africa, and the fifth most spoken language in the world (with 300 million native-speakers), Arabic is truly a global language (Nassra, 2016, Bean, 2015). The economy in Arab nations is also growing, making stable countries in the region attractive for businesses in the finance, media and commercial sectors that are looking to expand. This means that for people in these fields that are looking to break into the markets of the Middle East and North Africa, knowing Arabic will be an advantage (Nassra, 2016).

Americans who study Arabic will also gain insight into the Arab world, culture and people that they would otherwise not have and this will allow them and their organizations to understand local context, culture, traditions, business operations, etc. that are important to people and businesses operating in the Middle East. Knowledge of Arabic is also important for those who work in or are looking to work in the fields of international relations and foreign affairs. It's not

news to anyone that the United States is involved in the Middle East and has been for the past few decades, therefore, it should not come as a surprise that US government agencies that deal with political, military and economic ties to the Middle East have expressed the need for those trained in Arabic. Like in the business world, those who are working with or in the Middle East in regards to political and military actions should be learning Arabic because it will help them understand the culture and the people; part of the United States' mistakes in this region lies heavily with Americans' ignorance to it. For those Americans who do not have business dealing with the Middle East and North Africa and have no intention of doing so, there are still benefits for learning Arabic. In general, Americans learning Arabic will facilitate a greater understand of the Arab culture and people, including both Arab people in the Middle East and North Africa and Arab Americans. This cultural understanding is necessary for Americans to rebuild connections with Arab people and those of Arab heritage; these connection have become necessary thanks to an erosion of trust in Americans, which has been caused by years of military interventions and racial and religious prejudice and discrimination. People who study Arabic, learn about the culture in their language learning and build these connections will bring themselves closer to Arab people, seeing more perspectives and information than what the mainstream media offers. By sharing this information and new perspectives with other Americans, more accepting and welcoming behaviors and attitudes will be encouraged in American and Western culture and society (Bean, 2015). So no matter who one is, learning Arabic has its benefits for the American people, whether it be people in business, international relations or average citizens who understand the social importance of rebuilding connections with those of Arab heritage.

Not only do Americans need to start learning these languages, that are becoming more essential to everyday life, trade and international relations, but they need to be taught using effective methods. Effective methods are important so that students of foreign language retain their language skills for years to come, opposed to only understanding for a short period of time. Two exercises/activities in particular have been researched and shown evidence of their success in regards to foreign language learning. These two exercises/activities are collaboration work and an extensive reading program.

The study that looked into collaborative learning in foreign languages was conducted in an English language class in Malaysia (where English is considered a foreign language). It found that when properly prepared and thought out, foreign language classes with activities involving freely flowing discussions can be an effective tool for learners. This is because it creates interaction between the students who are learning the same subject and promotes creative thought. Collaborative work among students also fosters the same kind of relationship that students have when working together in other classes, such as on group projects and science labs, etc., meaning that they tend to give each other social and academic support, while lessening anxiety regarding performance in the subject. In terms of a foreign language classroom, collaborative work, especially that which is discussion based, can reduce students' dependence on the teacher and encourage conversation, developing the skills and abilities needed to converse. In this type of classroom with this type of atmosphere, students do not feel under pressure to participate and in fact voluntarily take part in the classroom activities. When they do this, students learn better and increase their chances of success in the class. Conversely, classes that do not employ this method of discussion, rather they use the "chalk

and talk” method, where students are presented information but do not have conversations or discussions about it, have seen that students have greater difficulty fully grasping the information; students are expected to absorb and understand the material being taught, however, with little class engagement, many struggle to achieve even decent grades. Simply put, a class that leads to passive learners and non-participants isn’t doing any favors for the students – it is most likely that most students will not perform well and not learn how to speak a foreign language (Ibrahim et al., 2015). Recognizing that this is the case, foreign language classes in the United States should be conducted in a more group orientated way, with the requirement of participation from all students.

The study that looked into extensive reading programs in foreign languages was conducted in an English language class in Yemen (where English is considered a foreign language). It was noticed that students were not retaining vocabulary in the target language, which lead to other gaps in their foreign language learning. In order to remedy this issue, a program implemented an “extensive reading” aspect, which used books that were familiar to the students, the only difference was that the books were in the target language. Extensive reading in the target language proved to increase general language competence by giving the students an effective way to gain word recognition, retain vocabulary and improve reading comprehension, all of which led to better oral and writing skills. This is the case because relatively few vocabulary words are acquired through specific vocabulary training, such as when a few words are taught together in class and exercises are done that relate to that set of words; vocabulary retention and word recognition skills are better acquired through reading material (and the more interesting the material to the student, the better), as this is how people learn a

lot of their native language. Extensive reading, by introducing students to reading material they would have already had experience with when learning their native language, also further exposes students to the language they are learning, therefore narrowing the “exposure gap” between their first and second languages. Exposure like this has shown to positively effect students’ reading competence, writing, speaking skills and control over syntax, in ways that are much more like those of native speakers. Essentially, extensive reading helps students pull together all the skills that are necessary in knowing a foreign language and helps them develop abilities that they will need later in life for education, career, etc. (Rao and Babu, 2016). Upon realizing the benefits to overall foreign language learning that the extensive reading activities provide students, classes in the United States should thoroughly consider implementing these practices in foreign language classes.

Classroom Observations

In order to see what practices are currently being used in foreign language classes in the United States, class needed to be observed. To see this and the differences between types of classes and types of teaching methods, specifically book method and immersion method, these two types of classes were observed, both on La Salle University’s campus. To see how the book method is used in a classroom, a Spanish 101 class (as part of La Salle’s regular classes for enrolled students) was observed. This class is similar to the majority of foreign language classes that are taught in the United States. To see how the immersion method is used in a classroom, a Level 1 English immersion class (as part of La Salle’s English Language Institute, for international students before they enroll at La Salle) was observed. As partially evident through

the fact that the immersion class was part of the university's language institute, the immersion type of class is not typical in the American education system; rather, this type of class is offered through more private and exclusive (read: expensive) entities. The classes were very different in regards to the atmosphere of the classroom, the material taught and organization.

Observations from Spanish 101

The Spanish 101 class that was observed was made up of 18 students and was held twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays for approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes for each class, from 2:00 to 3:15pm. The class focused on teaching all of the major skills one needs to know to become proficient in a foreign language: reading, writing, listening and speaking. The professor was a native Spanish speaker and conducted the class half in Spanish and half in English. English was used in the beginning of the class to discuss instructions and objectives for that day's class. During the time of observation, the class focused on two subjects: irregular verbs and direct object pronouns. When grammar concepts were being discussed, more English was used.

When practicing irregular verbs, the professor introduced a hands-on activity. The professor started by throwing a plastic egg to students and inside the egg was an irregular verb. Whoever caught the egg needed to figure out the conjugation for the 6 subject pronouns (yo, tu, el/ella, etc.) and say them for the class. While the student did this, the professor wrote the conjugations on the board and reminded students of the spelling changes and the endings of each verb. The entire class then repeated the words. The class then moved on to discussing direct object pronouns. At this time, the professor used the computer and screen to project a

chart of direct object pronouns on the board. This was used to give students a visualization and they used it to create examples using the grammar concept. Throughout the class, the professor would introduce new phrases in Spanish. Then, to signify that this was a new phrase, the professor would repeat it again, then translate it into English, and then have the students repeat it back three times. Afterward, the phrases were accompanied with words that related to it and these words were also repeated by students. When students were not working on activities out loud with the professor, they were given exercises from their book to work on and were allowed to work in pairs or individually. At the end of class, a paper was passed out and students were instructed to complete it. Half of the exercises were in English. The professor explained that this was because students needed to understand the new grammar concepts in their own language because they could effectively use it in Spanish. Whatever part of the worksheet that was not completed by the end of the class period was assigned as homework.

From observation, the atmosphere of the classroom appeared to be “laid back.” Numerous students were tardy, which didn’t seem to be an issue, and students occasionally had side conversations with each other, which were in English. Students also did not typically take notes when going over new grammar concepts. One potential issue that was observed was that when repeating after the professor, which was done on several occasions, students repeated collectively and not individually; not all voices were heard, indeed it was clear that about half of the students were not even trying to repeat after the professor – eventually, repeating turned into just one mumbled voice. It was also clear that not all students were actively participating in the class and while the professor tried to include them, it seemed difficult with a class this size. When students did participate, however, they were encouraged

by the teacher to do their best and not feel embarrassed by what they did not get on the first try. Students were also clearly itching to get out of class, as they packed up early, before class was finished, and while the professor was still describing the homework and the objectives for the next class.

Observations from Level 1 English Immersion

The Level 1 English immersion class that was observed was made up of 5 students and was held four days a week on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. There were two types of classes that made up this English immersion class; each class concentrated on two of the necessary skills needed to learn a foreign language. One focused on reading and writing and was held from 9am to 12pm (with a break from 10:30 to 10:45) and the other class focused on speaking and listening and was held from 12:30pm to 2pm. The classes each had a different professor, both of whom were native English speakers. While the classes taught different concepts and subjects, were organized slightly different and had different classroom atmospheres, both classes were conducted 100% in English. Observations from the reading and writing class will be discussed first and observations from the speaking and listening class will be discussed second. It is important to discuss the classes separately because they teach different concepts, through different types of exercises and activities and have created different classroom atmospheres.

The reading and writing class focused on numerous topics, most pertaining to writing and reading, though the topics used to discuss these things varied. Grammar wise, the class discussed gerunds (verb+ing) and infinitives ("to"+verb). Writing wise, the class learned about

how to write a paragraph which included learning about writing strategies, main ideas, supporting details and examples. Reading wise, students learned how to recognize and look for the meanings of words and how to spot clarifications of definitions while reading. To enhance their reading skills, the class read a variety of paragraphs and stories about animals and scientific concepts, such as innate behavior, territoriality, migration and habituation. The wide range of subjects that were discussed in class was seen again when a pop quiz was distributed to the class; it was composed of eight questions and no two questions were related to the same subject.

Every day, the reading and writing class started with the professor checking to see if the previous night's assigned homework was completed by every student in the class. Even if a student comes into class late, the professor still checked that they did their homework. The professor expressed a calm but negative reaction if a homework assignment is not completed. The class then went over the homework. The class then got into the exercises and activities for the day. During exercises that involve words that the students have not learned yet, the professor read the words aloud and students repeat for pronunciation. Students also had "word journals" which they used to keep track of new words they learn. When they came across a word they don't know, either while reading a piece of text or in classroom discussion, students were supposed to write down the word in their word journal, as well as the type of word (noun, verb, etc.), the definition of the word and a sentence of their own creation which uses the word and gives context clues to its meaning. When students came across words that they had not learned about in class, and they did not ask for the definition, the professor asked the students for their own definitions to determine if they did in fact know the word.

When moving on to exercises that dealt with gerunds and infinitives, students took turns reading sentences that contained examples of both grammar concepts out loud. Then, other students would identify the gerund and infinitives and then another student would re-read the sentence. Then, the students were given an in class assignment. The task was to write a descriptive paragraph about their ideal dream job. The class read the assignment aloud and then discussed with the professor what job they chose to write about and why. After this, students took time to plan their paragraph. Students were given more than 10 minutes to efficiently plan their paragraph, which included answering questions about their chosen jobs, which they were instructed to give as many specifics as possible about. These questions were not answered in full sentences but rather in note form. While in the planning process, the professor encouraged students to use all words that they had at their disposal, which meant using their dictionaries and looking back at previously studied words.

With another activity, students discussed animals, where they talked about their own experiences and opinions of different types of animals. They proceeded to read a 9 paragraph story (that they had already read the day before) about different kinds of animals (and remember, extensive reading (and this is extensive for a beginner class) has been researched and proven to be a very effective tool in foreign language learning). While reading, students were asked to highlight definitions they found and identify certain words. They then went over what each student found. This class also implemented pop quizzes. Students had almost an hour and a half to complete the quiz and while doing so, were free to ask questions they had about the quiz. The explanations for the questions were discussed with the entire class so other students could benefit from the questions. As students finished the quiz, they were given an

assignment to complete in the book; time was not wasted and students did not sit idly by, waiting for others to finish. The assignment dealt with previously learned chapters, so it was a review and a refresher, requiring students to call upon earlier knowledge in order to complete the assignment. For the exercises in the assignment, students were allowed to collaborate with each other or work alone. After everyone was finished with the quiz, the professor took the time to discuss the quiz and go over answers. At the end of the class, the professor returned to the students some graded homework, which had comments and corrections on it and asked students if they had any questions about it.

From time spent in the class, the English immersion class felt very different from the Spanish 101 class. With such a small class size, only 5 students, everyone knew each other and worked together. Likewise, all students were called on the same amount of times, no one was left out in activities, and everyone was readily participating in the class. Each student had access to the professor when they needed help or clarification on an assignment and the professor was very involved in the class; while students did independent work, the professor walked around and asked if they needed help and in group work, if the professor saw a student struggling with a particular concept, set of words, etc. they would take time to individually work with the student to ensure that nobody fell behind in the class. In general, the professor encouraged students to do their best in all exercises and activities. The professor also got after students when necessary. This included telling particular students to pay attention more, reminding them to stay on task, and correcting improper ways of speaking, such as talking with their hand over their mouth. The atmosphere established also seemed very open, where students were not hesitant to ask questions and admit when they didn't understand concepts,

specific words, or instructions for assignments. However, other aspects of the class were strict. As it was an immersion class, students were not allowed to use their native language in the class and any time the professor heard any words that weren't English, the students were immediately reminded that these side conversations were not allowed. Phones were also taken in the beginning of class, ensuring that students would not get distracted during exercises and activities that they found difficult or did not like. Students also did not get away with absences, tardies and incomplete homework assignments without having the professor notice and make a comment. In all three cases, the professor explained to the students that continuing this behavior would negatively affect their grade and could lead to expulsion from the class entirely.

Compared to the reading and writing class, the speaking and listening class was able to explore a wider variety of topics. This was due to the nature of the course, in which speaking and listening skills were practiced a great deal through classroom discussions (and remember, collaborative work, including discussions, has been researched and proven to be a very effective tool in foreign language learning). The speaking and listening class talked about animal intelligence (with an accompanying discussion on students' opinions regarding animals' abilities, emotions and their relation to humans), body language and nonverbal communication, and note taking strategies. The class also spent a day discussing complicated historical and societal topics, such as the slave trade, African Americans, modern day slavery, caste and class systems, ethnicity, discrimination and racism.

To discuss this variety of topics, the class had a TV screen connected to a laptop set up and used media frequently in class. The screen always displayed an English-Arabic translator and an English-French translator when necessary, however, the computer was used for a

variety of other reasons. When discussing animals and their intelligence, the class used YouTube to look up videos that showed what they were talking about. Later, when learning about the slave trade, the professor pulled up Google Maps to find where the African countries most devastated by the slave trade were and where the countries of the European perpetrators were. When discussing ethnicity, the professor used the computer to show the students ancestry.com, which they used to describe what they had learned about their own ethnicity. Overall, the use of media in the speaking and listening class gave an added visual component to the class, which gave the students an opportunity to see more specifically what they were studying and also help clarify topics if there was confusion.

When the class moved on listening to an audio lecture, they first went through a word bank of new words that would be featured in the upcoming lecture. The professor gave examples of certain words the students did not know, however, some words' meanings were more difficult to get across and the online translator was used. Then, students were instructed to take notes and discussed note taking strategies. Part of their note taking involved filling out a graphic organizer. The professor also drew the graphic organizer on the board and when the lecture was over, each student was given a dry erase marker and the class was encouraged to fill out the board organizer, allowing everyone to see what each other wrote and opening up the class for discussion about what the lecture was teaching. At the end, the organizer was not fully filled in, so the class listened to the lecture for a second time. During the second time, the professor corrected what was on the board and added information where it was missing.

While it is still an English immersion class, the speaking and listening class had a different atmosphere than the morning reading and writing class. It was a bit more laid back of

a class; there were some side conversations in the students' native languages (though the class work was conducted all in English) and phones were not taken, so during more "boring" periods of the class, students could be seen entertaining themselves on their phones and not paying attention. That being said, the class had a very hands on and open atmosphere, which students seemed to respond well to. Some exercises and activities in the class were developed to get the students involved and not just sitting in their seats, listening to the professor. When discussing non-verbal communication, there were activities that involved the students making facial expressions, body motions, and interacting with each other. The class was very open as well. All of the students participated without being pushed and this included during discussion periods. Students freely gave examples about body language in their families and cultures and gave their views and opinions regarding the complex topics they were learning about. When discussing these topics, there was no time limit given; if a good conversation (in English) had developed among the students and professor of the class, the professor allowed the talk to continue until it fizzled out. In general, the professor was personable and affectionate with the students, however, they would also get after students if it was clear to them that the students were not putting effort into their work.

What Are the Differences Between Book Method and Immersion Method as Seen Through Classroom Observations?

From observing the Spanish 101 class and the English immersion class, clear differences between the book method and the immersion method could be seen. In the Spanish 101 class, using the book method, the topics discussed in class focused on specifically language concepts

and while this was the case, the class was not conducted solely in Spanish. On the other hand, the English immersion class was conducted completely in English and while the focus is on language, it is discussed through a variety of topics that aren't related to language. These variety of topics led to open discussion in the immersion class, which, probably due to the lack of assortment in the topics of the class, was not seen in the Spanish 101 class. On that note, the Spanish 101 class also used less of a variety of exercises and activities in class while the English immersion class employed many types of exercises and activities. It was also observed that the work in the Spanish 101 class was not as intense as the English immersion class; exercises in the Spanish 101 class usually did not take longer than 10 minutes, while the English immersion class had students writing paragraphs, reading multiple page stories and listening to long audio lectures. In general, with their sometimes lack of participation, use of mobile devices, comments in English and packing up early for class, students of the book method were less focused than students learning with the immersion method, who were almost always on task and participating in a language which was not their own.

What Do Students Say About Their Language Learning?

After classroom observations were conducted, a survey was given to each class. The survey was conducted because it matters what students have to say about their experience learning a foreign language and how they see their abilities and progression. While it is true that exercises, activities and exams can evaluate students' performance and understanding,

they are not the only way and they might not be the most accurate evaluation. If exams are particularly easy, they could give a false representation of students' skills. Likewise, if some students are not good test-takers, their grades will show them learning and understanding less than they actually are; the fact is, asking students about their experience and perceptions is important because students are capable of assessing their own learning and comprehension. Students know if they understand the material being taught, or not. On top of that, students need to feel comfortable and confident in their language abilities, enough to use them, and only students can describe how comfortable and confident they are.

The survey conducted asked 13 questions, all carefully thought out to acquire certain information about the surveyed groups and their experience learning a foreign language. Students were told that surveys were completely anonymous and that they could choose to leave any questions blank if they did not want to answer. Most questions gave answers as options for students to place a check mark beside if it pertained to their answer to the question, however a couple questions were open-ended and asked for an explanation for their reasoning. Results of the Spanish 101 classes are presented separately, as they were different classes and opinions of the classes as expressed on the survey seemed to vary more than one might expect; for these reasons, it did not seem right to group them together, which could possibly give a misleading reading of the survey results. Here are the questions in the survey and the rationale for asking each question.

1. Have you previously studied the language you are studying in this course? If yes, when, where, and for how long? If yes, why are you starting in the beginner's level?
 - The first part of this question was asked because it is important to know if students

had previous knowledge of the language; were they all truly beginners? If they had studied the language before, it is important to know how long ago it was, in what type of setting they studied it in and for how much time they spent learning the language. Lastly, if students had previous knowledge of the language, then fact that they are starting at the level of someone without previous knowledge is significant. The reasons for starting education in this language over again could say something about the education system in regards to foreign languages.

2. Have you had exposure to this language at home?

– This was necessary to ask because home immersion yields different results than learning a language purely from a classroom. Students who had exposure at home (maybe with native speakers) probably understand the language differently than students who only have access to the language in the classroom.

3. Why are you taking a language course? (please mark all that apply); Why this particular language? (please mark all that apply)

Interested in Language, University Requirement, Major/Minor Requirement

General Interest, Ancestral/Family Connection, Relation to Future Career, Relation to Future Travel, Advantage in Everyday Life, Other

– One aspect that determines the success of learning any subject is the amount of effort that students put into their own learning and education. Sometimes, this has to do with their interest in the course or lack thereof. It should be determined how much of the

class was genuinely interested in taking it and how many were taking it as a required course. Then, I thought the students' reasoning behind taking the language that they chose was important because I wanted to see if they saw specific benefits from this language and what those were or if it was simply more interest in this language compared to other choices.

4. How well are you performing in this course?

Very Well, Well, Okay, Not Good, Poorly

- This question was asked to determine how students saw their own abilities. It was a chance for students to be honest and admit if they were not performing as expected. This was asked because if many students do not feel the class is preparing them to speak the language, there is a problem. On the other hand, if students see themselves improving and doing well, then the class is doing what it is intended to do.

5. What exercises/practices do you find helpful to your learning of this language?

Group Work, Individual Work, Vocabulary Practices, Grammar Exercises, Reviews for Quizzes/Exams, Homework Assignments, Use of Media (videos, music, etc.)

- This question was asked to see what kind of exercises, practices and activities students were responded to in class and what they found helpful. Group work is listed because research shows that this is an effective method for learning a foreign language; individual work is listed because it is the opposite of group work. Vocabulary practices is listed because research has shown that exercises involving specific vocabulary sets are

not the most effective ways to help vocabulary retention. The other suggestions are listed because these are aspects that appear in the courses. This is important because classes should be implementing activities that help students learn a language.

6. What exercises/practices do you not find helpful to your learning of this language?

Group Work, Individual Work, Vocabulary Practices, Grammar Exercises, Reviews for Quizzes/Exams, Homework

Assignments, Use of Media (videos, music, etc.)

- The same options were given in this question as in the previous question for purposes of continuity; I believed that there shouldn't be a change in the activities listed from the previous question. Like the previous question, it is important to ascertain which activities are not helping students improve their language abilities; if activities are not helpful, it is wasteful to spend time carrying them out and this leads to ineffective teaching and learning.

7. What is the atmosphere for the classroom?

Laid Back (occasional or frequent side conversation, less focus on work, etc.), Strict (focus is always on language, no side conversations, etc.)

- This question was asked to determine how focused the classroom is to the target language. The atmosphere is a huge aspect of how students learn subject, especially in regards to a foreign language. The suggestions regarding what "laid back" and "strict" mean were given to ensure that all students had the same definitions when reporting

what kind of atmosphere the class had.

8. How much of the course is individual work?

Most, Half, Some, Little

- This question was asked to see how much work the class did individually, especially because research has shown the foreign languages are learned best in collaborative methods.

9. Do you feel you are given enough time to complete assignments in class?

- This question was asked because it is important to know if students feel rushed through activities and that they need more time to digest materials. The question also came to me while observing the English immersion class, which gave some rather intense assignments in class, however, dedicated a large amount of time to those assignments.

10. How involved (helpful, constantly working with students, etc.) is the professor?

Very, Somewhat, Little

- This question was asked because it is important to know how the professor interacts with the students and how accessible they are to students. It's been shown that in classes where students perform better when professors are involved and helpful.

11. What could be done to enhance your language learning? (please mark all that apply)

More Use of Media (videos, music, etc.), More Concentration on Target Language, More Discussion about Culture (of people who speak target language), More Presentations, More Research Projects, More Reading, More Group Work

- This question was asked because not all language classes use these teaching methods, though it has been proven that a variety of exercises, activities and discussions can increase students' interest in and attention to foreign languages that they are learning.

Use of media and more concentration on the target language was put on the suggestion list because these are much more present in the English immersion class than the Spanish 101 class. Research, discussed earlier, has also proven that more reading (including research projects) and group work (including presentations and discussions about the culture) help students in foreign language classes, so that is why these exercises/activities have been put on the suggestion list. I wanted to see what students thought would be helpful to figure out what kind of activities should be employed in typical classes.

12. Do you think enough Americans learn a foreign language proficiently? Please explain.

- This question should be self-explanatory; students who are living and studying in the United States (regardless of whether they are native), who are learning a foreign language, were asked this question because through their experiences, they can assess whether enough Americans are learning a foreign language. American students can answer this based on what they have heard, their experiences with other people and

perceptions in society. Students who are not Americans, but living and studying at La Salle University were asked this question for the same reason; since they are living and studying in the United States, they have probably formed opinions about Americans' foreign language abilities. As "outsiders," they also offer a different perspective of the situation.

13. How old are you?

18 – 24, 24 – 35, 35 – 50, 50+

- This was asked of respondents because it has been proven that the older someone is, the more difficult it is to learn a foreign language. Since students at La Salle University are of all ages, I wanted to see if there were any outliers who could be having a particularly difficult time learning a foreign language.

Survey Results from Spanish 101 Class (TR 2:00 – 3:15)

These are the results of the Spanish 101 class (TR 2:00 – 3:15), surveyed on 11/10/16. Of the 18 students in the class, 14 were present and all 14 participated in the survey. All respondents were between the ages of 18 and 24. Of the 14 respondents, 10 said they had previously taken at least one Spanish class, though most said they had a few years of Spanish classes. Typically, these classes were taken in high school. Students who previously had Spanish instruction gave numerous reasons for why they were in a beginner's level class: numerous students said that their previous teachers were not good, others said that they had forgotten

what they learned in their previous classes and some others said that they didn't think they understood the basics and/or felt that there were gaps in their knowledge of the language. A couple students were taking the introduction course because it was an easy elective. In regards to the question about language at home, 3 students said they had exposure to Spanish at home.

Half of the students in this Spanish class said they were taking the class for a university or major/minor requirement. The other half of the class were taking the class because they had an interest in the language. Regardless of whether the students were taking a foreign language as a requirement or because of interest, they picked Spanish over the other languages offered for a reason. 5 students said they chose Spanish because of general interest, 4 said it was because of the relation to future careers, 2 said it was because the relation to future travel, 8 said it was because Spanish would give them an advantage in everyday life and 3 said it was because they already took it. None of the students said that they were doing "poorly" or "not good" in the class; 5 said they were doing "very well," 5 said they were doing "well," and 4 said they were doing "okay."

Of the exercises and activities given in the surveys, all students found some helpful and others not as helpful. 7 students found group work helpful while 3 did not. 9 students found individual work helpful while 5 said it was not. 12 students said that vocabulary practices were helpful while 2 said they were not. 8 students found grammar exercises to be helpful while 3 said they were not. 8 students thought that reviews for quizzes/exams were helpful while 1 said they were not. 6 students thought homework assignments and use of media was helpful while 4 students did not find them to be so. As for the atmosphere of the classroom, 11 students

considered the class to be laid back and 3 thought it had a stricter feel. Answers varied more when it came to how much of the class was comprised of individual work; 4 students thought that most of the class was individual work, 6 thought half of it was, 3 thought some of it was and 1 student thought that little individual work was done. Regardless of the type of work done in class, all 14 students said they are given enough time to complete assignments in class.

In regards to the professor, 13 students reported that their professor was very involved and helpful; only 1 student said only somewhat involved. All students said that different exercises and activities could be employed in the class to enhance their learning. Of the suggestions given on the survey, 5 students wanted more use of media, 5 said more concentration on target language, 5 said more discussion about culture, 3 said more presentations, 3 said more reading and 5 said more group work. Some students also made their own suggestions. One student suggested that the class have more exercises that require speaking so they could practice pronunciation. Other students made suggestions related to the structure of the class, rather than specific exercises and activities. One student would like more time to digest new material learned and another student proposed that the class move slower so students can remember material long term – not just for the quizzes and exams.

Many of the students thought that not enough Americans are learning a foreign language proficiently. Of the 14 respondents, 11 students thought Americans were falling behind in foreign languages and they gave many reasons for their thinking. Some students described that the American education system does not stress learning a foreign language, especially not like other subjects. Students also mentioned that most schools do not teach foreign languages in primary school, when it would be easiest to learn. Building off of this,

students said that Americans choose not to learn a foreign language later in life because it is different to learn a new language after a certain age and it is complicated for beginners. It was also noted that secondary school usually do not require students to learn a foreign language and if on the off chance it is required, students usually do not carry on to attain fluency and they do not speak the language outside of the classroom. In essence, foreign languages appear to not be taken seriously in the American education system. Of the students who said that not enough Americans are learning a foreign language, one was an international student and described that Spanish is their 4th language and from their experience, most Americans only know English. Other students gave a reasoning for this; they said that Americans do not want to learn a new language, they simply do not have an interest in it and/or they do not believe they need to learn another language in this country. However, 1 student believed that enough Americans are learning a foreign language because every language in the world is spoken here; that being said, it remains to be seen whether this is because American-born native English-speakers are learning a wide variety of languages or because immigrants are bringing these languages and possibly teaching their children. For this question, 2 students in the class chose not to respond.

Survey Results from Spanish 101 Class (TR 11:00 – 12:15)

These are the results of the Spanish 101 class (TR 11:00 – 12:15), surveyed on 11/17/16. Of the 17 students in the class, 15 were present and all 15 participated in the survey. 12 students were between the ages of 18 and 24, 2 students were between the ages of 24 and 35 and 1 student chose not to answer. Of the 15 respondents, 8 said they had previously taken at

least one Spanish class. These classes were usually taken in high school. Some of those who had previous Spanish education were starting in the beginner's level because they believed they needed a refresher and wanted to get more comfortable with the language. Other students said they started in the introduction course because it was easy and a couple other students said that they did not know how to take the entrance exam to test out of the 101 course. Regardless of whether they had taken a Spanish course before, 3 students said they had exposure to the language at home or through friends and co-workers.

Most (12) of the students in the class reported that they were taking a Spanish class because it was a university and/or major/minor requirement. Some (3) of those students and 1 other said that they were taking the class because of an interest in the language. Their reasons for choosing Spanish varied; 6 students said they chose Spanish because of general interest, 1 said it was because they had ancestral/family connections to the language, 5 said it was because of the relation to future careers, 2 said it was because the relation to future travel, and 11 said it was because they believed that learning Spanish would give them an advantage in everyday life. When students were asked to rate their performance in the class, 2 said they were doing "very well," 7 said they were doing "well," 5 said they were doing "okay," and 1 student said they were doing "very poorly."

Of the exercises and activities given in the surveys, all students found some helpful and others not as helpful. 6 students found group work helpful while 5 did not. 7 students found individual work helpful while 5 said it was not. 9 students said that vocabulary practices were helpful while 2 said they were not. 13 students found grammar exercises to be helpful while 2 said they were not. 12 students thought that reviews for quizzes/exams were helpful while 3

said they were not. 8 students thought homework assignments while 2 said they were not. 4 students found the use of media was helpful while 5 students did not find it to be helpful. The students' opinions of the atmosphere in the class was relatively divided; 6 students thought the atmosphere was laid back, 6 though the atmosphere was strict and 3 students did not answer. Answers were also mixed regarding opinions about the amount of individual work in the course; 7 students thought that most of the class was comprised of individual work, 2 said half the class was conducted in individual work, 5 students said some individual work was done in class and 1 student did not respond. All but 1 student (who chose not to respond) said they felt that they had enough time to complete assignments in class.

For the involvement of the professor, 13 students thought the professor was very involved and helpful, 1 student thought the professor was somewhat involved and 1 student did not answer this question. Most of the students in the class thought that their Spanish education could be enhanced with a variety of exercises and activities. Of the suggestions given on the survey, 3 students wanted more use of media, 4 said more concentration on target language, 5 said more discussion about culture, 1 said more presentations, 5 said more reading and 3 said more group work. None of the students came up with their own suggestions for exercises and activities.

The general consensus in the class was that not enough Americans are learning a foreign language proficiently. Of the 15 respondents, 9 students thought that Americans were not focused on learning a foreign language. Reasons given for this are similar to the thoughts in the other Spanish 101, however, still deserve to be listed here. Some students thought that many Americans do not take the time to learn a foreign language because they do not see any

importance of purpose in this type of knowledge. Some said that they thought many students only take foreign languages in school as a requirement, not because they have any desire to learn the language, and consequently think foreign language is a joke and do not pay attention and put effort into the class. Likewise, students reasoned that if the class is taken as a requirement, most students do not use what they did learn outside of the classroom and they do not progress past introduction courses. Other students believed that foreign languages are introduced too late in the education system, making it difficult and frustrating to learn a 2nd language. One student even noted that foreign languages are introduced to students of other countries much earlier, which puts Americans behind the curve. One student said that Americans are not interested in expanding their cultural views, especially when it comes to populations of people they already do not like and this extends to learning foreign languages. There were other opinions though, with 3 students saying that enough Americans learn a foreign language proficiently. Their reasoning for this was because they were required to take foreign language classes in their high schools. However, one of these students mentioned that Americans only gain proficiency if they practice outside the classroom and apply it to their everyday life – it is debatable how many students do this, partially because of the lack of opportunities to practice in everyday life. For this question, 3 students in the class chose not to respond.

What Do These Results Tell?

The results and responses from the surveys given to the Spanish 101 classes are very telling about how Americans are learning foreign languages and how well they are learning

those languages. Though some responses vary and there is not a consensus on all questions, there are general conclusions that can be drawn from the results. These results will be used later to make recommendations regarding what could be done better in foreign language classes.

Over half of respondents said that they had previous Spanish instruction, usually a few years in high school. However, most of those who had previous classes said they were re-taking Spanish at a beginner's level because they did not feel they were taught well enough. One can conclude from this that students are not being adequately taught foreign languages at the secondary level. This could be because the most effective methods of teaching are not being used or because they are starting to learn foreign languages too late in life or both. The survey also shows that most students were taking Spanish because there was a language requirement from the university and/or their major/minor. The numbers show that only a minority of students here were taking a foreign language because they are genuinely interested. As suggested, it's certainly possible that many students who are taking a language as a requirement are not putting full effort into the class because they do not care about it and/or see it as a blow off class.

That being said, results show that most students thought they were doing well enough in the class, so students perceived themselves learning the language. This is despite most students thinking the class was laid back and less focused on the target language. Their success is probably partly attributed to their professor, since almost all students thought that their professor was very involved in their language learning. Even of the students who did not report that their professor was very involved in the class, no one said that the professor was only

involved a little bit. Also, almost all students believed that a more varied curriculum and exercises (use of media, focus on target language, discussion about culture, presentations, reading and group work) would be beneficial to learning a foreign language. This shows that not enough methods, exercises, practices and activities are being used in the classroom. The responses from the survey also show that most students in the classes do not believe that enough Americans are learning foreign language. Their responses give insight into why Americans have a foreign language deficit.

From responses (and some research), 5 reasons as to why Americans are not learning foreign languages have been determined. The first is ignorance; many Americans are not aware of the benefits of learning a foreign language and the importance of knowing more than one language. The second is apathy; it seems like many Americans do not have interest in learning a foreign language and since it is not required in many curriculums, they never spend time learning one. The third reason is arrogance; there are those Americans who believe that English is the most important language and always will be, therefore, there is no reason to learn another language. The fourth reason why not enough Americans are learning foreign languages is because of prejudice against foreign populations; Americans will not learn languages if they see those people who natively speak that language in a negative light. For example, some Americans will not learn Spanish if they think all Hispanics are thieves, rapists, murders, etc. and Americans will not learn Arabic if they think all Arabs and Muslims are terrorists. The last and fifth significant reason why Americans are not learning foreign language effectivity is because the United States has a lack of opportunities in regards to foreign language education. Education, especially “creative” classes, which foreign languages typically fall into, has been

experiencing budget cuts which take away from the quality of education students receive. There has been less classes and languages offered, meaning students have less access to foreign languages in the first place. Since students are starting in beginner's classes after years of previous education in the same language, due to poor teachers and forgetting what they learned, it shows that there is a shortage in qualified teachers to teach foreign languages and inadequate teaching methods are being employed in secondary education. For those who are not learning a foreign language or are not doing so adequately, a combination of these reasons could explain why this is the case. For Americans in general, all of these contribute in some way to Americans' foreign language deficit.

Survey Results from English Immersion Class (MTWR 9:00 – 2:00)

These are the results of the English Immersion class (MTWR 9:00 – 2:00), surveyed on 11/17/16. Of the 5 students in the class, 4 were present and all 4 participated in the survey. All respondents were between the ages of 18 and 24, except one who declined to report their age. Of the 4 respondents, all said they had some, usually 1 year of English but had forgotten what they learned and felt that they needed practice. 1 student had exposure to English at home.

All students were taking English as a university requirement and 1 had an interest in the language as well. Their reasons for learning English varied and they all gave multiple reasons why; 1 student said it was because of general interest, 1 student said it was because of ancestral connection, 3 students said it related to future careers, 2 students said it related to future travel and 1 student it would give them an advantage in everyday life. Of the 4 students, 2 said they were doing "very well" and 2 said they were doing "well."

Students of the class found that most of the exercises and practices are helpful. All students found group work, vocabulary practice and homework assignments to be helpful. 3 students found that the grammar exercises and the use of media in the classroom was helpful. 2 students thought that reviews for quizzes and exams was helpful and 1 student thought individual work was helpful. The students thought that the exercises and practices in class were so well prepared and fitted to them and their learning styles that only 1 student said that something was not helpful and that was individual work. All students thought that the atmosphere of the class was laid back, though 2 students also commented that it was sometimes strict. In regards to individual work, 3 students said that half the class was conducted in individual work and 1 said that some was. All 4 students said they had enough time to complete all tasks in class.

All 4 respondents all said that the professor(s) are very involved and helpful. Despite how well they said the exercises and practices in class were going, all of the students thought that more could be done to help them learn English effectively. Of the suggestions given on the survey, 3 students wanted more use of media, 4 said more concentration on vocabulary in the target language, 1 said more discussion about culture, 1 said more presentations, 1 said more research projects, 1 said more reading and 3 said more group work. One student also expressed that they wished they had more friends who spoke English so they could practice with them outside of the classroom.

Most (3) of the students thought that enough Americans learn a foreign language proficiently, however, they cited that they feel that of Americans who do learn a foreign

language, most choose to learn Spanish. One student specifically said that Americans don't learn their language, which is Arabic. For this question, one student chose not to respond.

What Do These Results Tell?

Comparing the results of the English immersion class to the results of the Spanish 101 class, one can see some differences. While there are less responses from this class, as there were only 4 students who took the survey (out of a possible 5 registered for the class), the answers do not differ much from each other; a consensus can be seen among the students of the class. All students reported that they were doing "well" or "very well." All students also agreed that numerous exercises and activities in class were helpful and only one student said that one part of class (individual work) was not helpful, which means that the class is employing effective exercises and practices for the students. They were probably well fitted for the students because the class size was so small that the professor could tailor the exercises and practices to the individuals of the class. From the responses, it has also been determined that compared to the Spanish 101 class, the English immersion class was less focused on individual work, and all students, opposed to most students, thought the professor was highly involved and helpful. Though some of the suggestions for classroom exercises and activities were already used in the English immersion class, all of the students thought that some could be used even more. This recognizes that the immersion method still isn't perfect and that students can add to their learning by giving suggestions about what could help them.

Possible Solutions for Americans' Foreign Language Deficit

Using the academic research conducted, the observations and the results from the student surveys, possible solutions to Americans' lack of knowledge in the area of foreign language can be suggested. By implementing these suggestions, it is likely that more Americans would learn foreign languages and learn them proficiently or even fluently. Since this is the case, Americans would not be falling behind the rest of the world in foreign language knowledge and they would not be at a disadvantage.

First, Americans need to recognize why they need to know foreign languages. This means combatting the reasons for why Americans don't learn foreign languages in the first place. They need to realize the benefits of foreign language, understand that English is not the only important language in the world and unlearn their prejudices that make them resistant to learning certain languages. The issue of apathy, simply the lack of interest in foreign languages cannot be easily changed, however, not all students are interested in math and science, and yet, these subjects are a part of the compulsory education system in the United States. This is where perceptions of foreign languages needs to start: the education system. From there, Americans can work on bettering their foreign language skills.

So in all actuality, schools are where America needs to start. The American education system needs to recognize the importance of foreign language learning and built it into the mandatory curriculum for all students. With the implementation of foreign languages being necessary classes for students, Americans will realize the benefits of learning a foreign language and understand that other languages are important. Teaching culture in language classes in school will also help Americans rethink their prejudices and recognize that the languages of the people they dislike are important too. Building foreign languages more into the educational

system will not necessarily bring about the end of apathy toward them, however, like with math and science, the requirement will force students to learn whether they are interested or not, which can sometimes be necessary; not everyone can like all subjects, but that doesn't mean those subjects are not necessary. Quite obviously, putting a greater focus on foreign languages in the educational system will create more opportunities for students, combatting the last of the main reasons previous mentioned as to why Americans are not learning foreign languages.

However, it isn't enough that the American educational system recognizes the importance of foreign language learning and makes learning a foreign language mandatory in school (though it's a start). First, the government needs to allocate enough money to public schools so that they (public schools) can offer more classes, with more of a variety regarding language options, taught by qualified teachers who are using effective teaching methods. Once schools can offer enough language classes, taught by competent teachers, better teaching methods need to be put in place. From research, observations and surveys done for this paper, some key teaching methods and specifics regarding classes have been identified.

First, and perhaps most importantly, foreign language classes need to start in elementary school. Though research, observations and surveys for this paper were conducted at the collegiate level, the conclusion that has been reached is that the problem with foreign language learning does not start in higher education, but rather in grade school. The teaching for foreign languages needs to start as early as possible, though the critical period for learning a foreign language is typically deemed to be 5 to 15 (Petrovic, 2008). This is because learning a foreign language needs to start when areas of the brain are still forming, have plasticity, and

can learn a new language with greater ease (as compared to someone learning after the onset of puberty). Getting technical for a moment, the Wernicke's area of the temporal lobe controls how well people understand language, while the Broca's area of the front cortex controls how well someone can speak, can produce the correct pronunciation of words and understand deep grammatical aspects of a language (Blakeslee, 1997). During one's early years, both the Wernicke's area and the Broca's area are malleable and can learn and retain multiple languages with ease, however, after puberty, the Broca's area becomes fixed, making it much more difficult to learn a language during later teen and adult years. This is because there is an anatomical difference between people who become bilingual at an early age and those who do so at a later age and while fluency in a language can be attained after puberty, skills on par with that of a native speaker can rarely ever be acquired (Nicol and Barss, 2008, Petrovic, 2008). Starting young is the method used all over Europe and seeing Europeans' proficiency and fluency in foreign languages shows that they are effectively teaching their students how to speak foreign languages. Starting foreign languages at a young age would also end a common sentiment that was found on the student surveys, that Americans are not learning languages because they start too late and that it is more difficult for an adult to be a beginner.

Once classes are in elementary schools, the structure of the classroom needs to change from what it is today. Classes must be small sized, capped at 10 students per class. This is for individual attention and total participation. As seen from the observations, those in the English immersion class, those who could speak better English than their counterparts in the Spanish 101 classes could speak Spanish, received a great amount of individual attention from the professor and all students participated in the class. In such a small class, no one could slip under

the radar. Professors could easily identify the students who needed help and all students would have equal time to participate in the class. In larger classes, there isn't enough time for all students to participate in activities and/or students can easily choose to never participate and if students are not speaking, practicing the language, doing exercises and activities, they are not learning the language. Some subjects can be taught in large classes, however, with foreign language, smaller classes are key.

These smaller classes will also need to be structured in a way that allows for open discussion. This probably means discussions about topics that are not directly related to language concepts and this is a positive thing. Students who are not linguistic experts (which most likely none of them are) or who are not interested in the technical aspects of linguistics (of any language) will probably not be able and will not want to converse much about language concepts in class. Also, the technical aspects of a language are not often stimulating, meaning that it will not spark conversation and lead to students to use their language skills in class to talk about the topics being taught to them. This was seen in the Spanish 101 class. Students did not do much talking, however, this was no doubt partially due to the topics of the class, the fact that there was not much to talk about. On the other hand, the English immersion reading/writing class and even more so with the speaking/listening class had a lot of open discussions, on topics that easily facilitated participation in discussions. The point of offering varied topics of discussion is that it will make the class more interesting to students and make them want to talk, even if it is in a different language. It was clear that students were talking in order to offer up their opinions, asking questions in order to learn about the subjects and topics discussed, because they were curious and they wanted to know things, but they were doing it

all in a foreign language. While they were freely speaking because of the topic, what they were really doing was learning a foreign language and how to speak it fluently. When students do not do this, they are not fully engaging in the class and nothing learning in the best possible way.

Along with a variety of topics to discuss, foreign language classes need to have a variety of exercises and activities that would not typically be implemented in other classes. One thing that can be used in more foreign language classes is media. Videos, movies, music, podcasts, newspaper articles, magazine stories, art, etc. can all be used in interesting ways that add greatly to the experience of learning a foreign language and the understanding of that language. Media that has audio will typically help students hear how natives speak the language, so they can practice listening and understanding natives as well as work on their own pronunciation. Media that involves reading the written word will help students with their reading and writing skills. All of these, including media without audio or words, such as art, give students a new perspective and understanding of the culture of the people who speak the target language and this will further open up learning opportunities. If nothing else, media can be used to mix up classroom activities and keep students attention on the topic at hand. Other activities, such as presentations, in-depth reading assignments, research projects and group work also help students in the classroom by giving them new ways to learn a language and keeping them interested in the work they're doing. Research mentioned earlier has shown that in particular, in-depth reading assignments and collaboration work is very effective in foreign language learning. Also, students who responded to the surveys generally thought that more exercises and activities like the ones mentioned in this paragraph should be used in their classes because it would be helpful to them learning a foreign language.

Lastly foreign language classes in the United States need to stray away from using both the target language students are trying to learn and the students' native language. Using their own language is not benefiting them. Using English does not make students learn Spanish. Thus there needs to be more focus on the target language and if possible, classes should be conducted 100% in the target language. In regards to foreign language, it has been proven that compared to other methods, immersion leads to the best possible results. One researcher, Kara Morgan-Short, a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, wanted to see how different methods of learning a foreign language effect brain functions so she examined the brains of people who learned a language through the book method and those who learned through the immersion method. Those who had been immersed in the language, much how one is immersed in their first language, showed brain processes that were more like those of native speakers. This is proof that through immersion, adults can effectively learn a foreign language and their brains functions will be more like native speakers, meaning that they will have better control and understanding of the language (Mackey, 2014). This shows that immersion into anything is the best way to learn about it; simulated immersion in a classroom is the best way to learn a foreign language.

At first, it seems like implementing such programs could be difficult, however, the fact is that numerous states have started immersion programs in their schools and classes in schools that don't require the immersion method have also appeared. For instance, Delaware has implemented immersion programs in their school system, citing that it believes foreign language learning this way will make its students competitive in the global economy. Likewise, Utah started its immersion program in 2009 and now half of the state's school districts offer

elementary dual language programs. Their reasoning for using this method was to create stronger job candidates and to entice companies to the state, knowing that their workers would have this added, increasingly necessary, foreign language skill (Advocates Seek More, 2013). It should also be understood by educators, students and parents that while the immersion method appears to be the best way to proficiently learn and retain a foreign language, it still takes years of instruction to become fluent in that language (Rolstad, 2008). With this knowledge, the immersion programs in schools should not be rushed. From personal experience, benefits of the immersion method have also been seen. The French program at Greensburg-Salem High School in Greensburg, Pennsylvania has implemented the immersion method into classes, which occur for an hour and a half every day. After four years in the program, most senior students come out being biliterate/bilingual. In regards to foreign language learning, the immersion program is clearly effective. The goal is to teach students well enough so that they can read, write, speak and understand in a foreign language and the immersion method has given these exact results.

In conclusion, Americans need to learn how to read, write, speak and understand in a foreign language if they want to be competitive in the global economy and if they want their political and military actions to be as effective as possible. For this to happen, there needs to first be a change in the open-mindedness of people in regards to how they think about foreign languages. Then, people need to understand how knowing a foreign language will benefit them. This change in thinking about foreign languages will most likely be occurring at the same time as other changes; there also needs to be a change in the way foreign languages are taught if anyone expects the United States to make a comeback in the foreign language skills

department. The entire system of teaching foreign languages in the American educational system needs revamping. Americans need to start learning foreign languages at a young age and once classes are in elementary school, they cannot use the same methods that are being used today. There needs to be a change in the classroom atmosphere, what is taught and how things are taught. This includes employing the immersion method, teaching a variety of topics in the target language, and using more exercises, activities and techniques in the classroom. If Americans, in particular those who have influence in the educational system, recognize the need for change in regard to their foreign language skills and move forward by taking the steps suggested in this paper, then they will begin to close the gap between their foreign language abilities and the those of the rest of the world. In time, Americans will no longer have a foreign language deficit.

Annotated Bibliography

"Advocates Seek More Focus on Learning Foreign Languages: Issue Billed as Critical to

Competing in Global Economy." Education Week 33, no. 7 (October 9, 2013): 8.

Accessed October 8, 2016.

<http://dbproxy.lasalle.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/144345>

0482?accountid=11999.

This article explains why foreign language skills are important for getting a job and being successful in this world of constant globalization. It then goes on to explain how Americans are far behind other populations when it comes to foreign language skills, which makes them less competitive in the job market and is resulting in employers seeing a talent gap. The article continues on to give some reasons why Americans are so far behind in this area, specifically highlighting the strong push from science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and the backseat language arts has had to take. It rounds out the article by discussing language immersion programs that have been introduced in numerous states' school systems, such as in Delaware and Utah, in attempt to prepare students with skills they'll need in the future. This article is useful because it talks about Americans' lack of foreign language skills and why it's important.

Bean, Cameron. "Seven Reasons Why Now Is the Time to Learn Arabic." American Councils for International Education. May 12, 2015. Accessed November 30, 2016.

<https://www.americancouncils.org/news/seven-reasons-why-now-time-learn-arabic>.

This article gives seven specific reasons as to why people should start learning Arabic as a foreign language. The reasons are 1. There is a demand for Arab speakers, in government, private and non-profit sectors and not enough people to fill that demand. 2. Arabic is an international language, with hundreds of millions of native speakers and offers advantages for working, living, interacting and traveling abroad. 3. Learning Arabic will give insight and cultural understanding to Americans about the Middle East, which most people do not understand. It goes on to explain why this cultural understanding is so important. 4. Learning Arabic will give people an insight into the world's second largest and frequently misunderstood religion, Islam. 5. Learning Arabic will create better connections between Americans and Arabs. 6. People in the Middle East may look at Americans in a more positive light if more people tried to learn Arabic. 7. Studying Arabic offers a lot of traveling opportunities. Not all of these reasons are described in the paper because not all of them are persuasive enough in regards to convincing Americans to learn a foreign language. This article was a good source because it gave detailed explanation on some reasons that people wouldn't necessarily think of off the bat, such as the fact that Arabic speakers are/will be in demand, and also how learning Arabic could help American-Arab relations.

Blakeslee, Sandra. "When an Adult Adds a Language, It's One Brain, Two Systems." New York Times. July 15, 1997. Accessed October 7, 2016.

http://www.nytimes.com/1997/07/15/science/when-an-adult-adds-a-language-it-s-one-brain-two-systems.html?_r=1.

This article is about how the brain operates when using a native language and a foreign language. It discusses that learning two languages simultaneously during childhood will have a different effect on the brain than someone learning a foreign language later in life. It also mentions that when bilingual people suffer from episodes that affect their brain (such as epilepsy or a stroke), it's possible that they lose only one of their languages and not the other. This suggests that the brain stores the languages differently and is what led to the study that this article looks into. It looked at participants who were bilingual, some from birth and some who gained bilingualism later in life, and compared their brains while the participants used their native language(s) and foreign language. What was found were differences in the Broca's area. The Broca's area was dramatically different in those who did not learn their foreign language until later in life. This sheds light on why a second language is more difficult to learn than a native language; as speech and the understanding of deep grammatical aspects of language are controlled by the Broca's area (which is also concentrated on the native language), it's no wonder it takes a lot of intense training to rewire this part of the brain to use another language. This article is useful because it describes the neuroscience behind learning and using a language and how that changes between native and foreign language.

"Foreign Language Learning Statistics." Eurostat. January 2016. Accessed November 30, 2016.

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Foreign_language_learning_statistics.

This is a very comprehensive report, put out by Eurostat at the beginning of every year, concerning foreign languages being taught in schools in the European Union and also how well students are performing in these classes. The report shows that a large majority of students in the European Union are learning English at a very young age, usually in primary school. It also details how more than half of the students who go to schools in the European Union are learning more than one foreign language. It also talks about some of the changes that have occurred in some of the countries in the European Union regarding what foreign languages were learned and also how more students in some countries are learning more languages. This is a very important source because it gives a lot of details and statistics regarding the foreign language abilities of Europeans. This information is necessary when the foreign language abilities of Americans are being compared to those of Europeans. This source was also very good because not only did it give numerical information about foreign language learning in the European Union but it also gave an explanation as to why the European Union thinks that foreign languages are important and what the Union has done in order to preserve and affirm this belief. It also helps give ideas about how the United States should go about promoting multilingualism.

Ibrahim, NoorAileen, Mohamad Syafiq Ya Shak, Thuraiya Mohd, Nur' Ain Ismail, P. Dhayapari, Perumal, Azurawati Zaidi, and Siti Maryam Ali Yasin. "The Importance of Implementing Collaborative Learning in the English as a Second Language (ESL) Classroom in Malaysia." *Procedia Economics and Finance* 31 (2015): 346-53. Accessed October 8, 2016.

This study is primarily about how to apply more effective teaching methods in an English language classroom in Malaysia. That being said, as the study discusses the inadequacies of the classroom in Malaysia, there are distinct similarities with some language classrooms in the United States. Furthermore, English is a foreign language in Malaysia, so the suggestions made here relate to teaching foreign language in America. The specific method that this article discusses is how collaborative learning can be implemented in a foreign language classroom and help students succeed. The collaborative method is centered on working more on projects and activities with other students as opposed to simply listening to the teacher for the entire class. The main idea behind this is that students need to be active participants in their language education in order to absorb and comprehend the material to a point where they can use it on their own. The study continues on to list the general benefits of this method of teaching a language. It also mentioned what difficulties can arise, though they are minor, such as students may feel shy in peer groups, and in time, students should be able to get over these speed bumps without a problem. This study is useful because it provides information for a method of language learning that can be implemented into language learning programs in order to make them more interactive and successful.

Kibler, Amanda, and Sandy Philipose. "References for Cognitive Question." American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Accessed October 7, 2016.

https://www.actfl.org/advocacy/what-the-research-shows/references-cognitive#improves_cognitive.

This page from the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages is essentially a reference page that gives a list of academic articles and studies that have explored the relationship between learning and retaining foreign language skills and cognitive abilities. The study and name of the researcher(s) are given and then there is a description of the information found and the key points from the study are highlighted (so the reader does not have to look through all 50 or more academic articles).

Together, these studies make a firm case in regards to the positive effects that learning a language has on other brain abilities. Many studies showed that when put through numerous tests that determined cognitive abilities, students who started learning a language at a young age had developed their minds further than those who hadn't. Other studies showed that those who were bilingual showed increases in cognitive abilities as compared to those who were monolingual. Other studies showed that knowing a foreign language not only helps people develop certain abilities in their brain but also allows them to retain those abilities further into old age, as bilingual people tended to lose certain cognitive abilities after their monolingual counterparts did. This page of references and resources is useful because it gives a wide range of studies and articles to look at and compiled them in an easy to read format. It is also helpful to the case that learning a foreign language is beneficial in multiple ways.

Kibler, Amanda, and Sandy Philipose. "Studies Supporting Increased Academic Achievement."
American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Accessed October 7, 2016.
<https://www.actfl.org/advocacy/what-the-research-shows/studies-supporting>.

This page from the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages is essentially a reference page that gives a list of academic articles and studies that have explored the relationship between learning and retaining foreign language skills and academic achievement. The study and name of the researcher(s) are given and then there is a description of the information found and the key points from the study are highlighted (so the reader does not have to look through all 50 or more academic articles). Together, these studies make a firm case in regards to the positive effects that learning a language has on academic achievement (and not only in subjects related to language). The increased academic achievement mentioned across these many articles included 1. improved test scores, in areas such as math, reading comprehension and social studies, 2. improved reading abilities in their native language, 3. increased linguistic awareness, 4. enhanced ability to make scientific hypothesis and 5. higher SAT and ACT scores overall. This page of references and resources is useful because it gives a wide range of studies and articles to look at and compiled them in an easy to read format. It is also helpful to the case that learning a foreign language is beneficial for one's general academic achievement.

Kibler, Amanda, and Sandy Philipose. "What the Research Shows About Students' Attitudes and Language Learning." American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Accessed October 7, 2016. <https://www.actfl.org/advocacy/what-the-research-shows/what-the-research-shows-about-students'-attitudes-and-language-learning>.

This page from the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages is essentially a reference page that gives a list of academic articles and studies that have explored the relationship between learning and retaining foreign language skills and students' attitudes toward those who speak another language. The study and name of the researcher(s) are given and then there is a description of the information found and the key points from the study are highlighted. Together, these studies make a firm case in regards to the positive effects that learning a language has on students' attitudes regarding those who speak another language. In the studies provided, all mention that, compared to the students with no foreign language education, those who had some foreign language instruction had more favorable views of people who natively spoke the target language and better appreciated the culture of those people. This page of references and resources is useful because it gives various studies and articles to look at and compiled them in an easy to read format. It is also helpful to the case that learning a foreign language is beneficial for one's attitudes toward other people who speak another language, be it foreigners or people in their own country.

Lee, Edmund. "Will Learning Chinese Make You More Money?" CBS News. August 23, 2010.

Accessed November 30, 2016. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/learning-chinese-will-you-make-more-money/>.

This article seeks to answer the question of whether learning Chinese is a good idea, in regards to making more money. It first explains how China's economy is growing and why that should be important to anyone, not only Americans. Then, it explains what that growing economy means, in terms of business, trade and employment. This leads the article to describe that employers, specifically those who are operating or looking to operate in China, perhaps send employees overseas, are looking for people who proficiently speak Mandarin, therefore, know this language could be very important to some Americans. It also mentions that more and more employers are looking for bilingual employees regardless of what two (or more) languages they speak, further cementing the idea that knowledge of foreign languages is becoming crucial in gaining employment, especially in certain fields, such as business. This article was helpful because it gave reasons as to why Mandarin is growing in importance and why Americans should be paying attention to that and learning Mandarin as a foreign language. Though the article is meant to deal with figuring out if learning this language will make you more money, it can also be used for the other reasons it gives about learning Mandarin.

Mackey, Alison. "What Happens in the Brain When You Learn a Language." The Guardian.

September 4, 2014. Accessed September 21, 2016.

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/sep/04/what-happens-to-the-brain-language-learning>.

This article reviews a study about how different methods of learning a language effects how the brain works and then deciphers the results. In the study, researchers took into account which areas of the brain were used for native language and then looked at how those areas changed when the test subjects used a foreign language. The foreign language in the study was also learned by the test subjects in two different ways: through the explanations of the rules of the language (more book method) and by being immersed in the language (immersion). When using a foreign language, the test subjects who learned the foreign language through the immersion method had brains that looked more similar to when they used their native language. Test subjects who learned their foreign language the other way had more differences regarding the areas that were used when they used their native language and foreign language. This article is useful because it builds off another article in this annotated bibliography (which discussed the neuroscience behind learning and using a language) by showing how one method (immersion) of learning a foreign language allows the brain to function more like how it functions when using its native language. This is important to the case that the immersion method of learning a language is the way to go.

McComb, Chris. "About One in Four Americans Can Hold a Conversation in a Second Language."

Gallup. April 6, 2001. Accessed November 30, 2016.

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/1825/about-one-four-americans-can-hold-conversation-second-language.aspx>.

These are results from a Gallup Poll conducted in the United States regarding how many American can speak a foreign language well enough to hold a conversation in it. The result is that about 1 in 4 Americans report being able to hold a conversion in a foreign language. The poll also reports on other aspects of Americans' foreign language skills, such as what languages Americans tend to speak most, and opinions regarding foreign languages, such as what Americans think about the importance of learning a foreign language and the importance of immigrants to speak English as opposed to a foreign language. The poll also went into detail about who is more or less likely to know a foreign language in the United States. The likelihood was described in relation to age, education level, region one lives in and political ideology that one holds. This is an important source because when comparing the United States to Europe, reliable data about foreign language abilities are needed and this goes above and beyond just the numbers by also giving other information about what Americans think about foreign languages and which Americans would be more or less likely to be able to speak in a foreign language. It's important information because it could help describe why certain Americans are not learning foreign languages and ultimately, why Americans' are falling behind.

Nardelli, Alberto. "Most European Can Speak Multiple Languages. UK and Ireland Not So Much." The Guardian. September 26, 2014. Accessed November 30, 2016.

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/sep/26/europeans-multiple-languages-uk-ireland>.

This article is a short article, which details the official, regional, indigenous and minority languages spoken within the European Union and then it explains how well Europeans are at speaking not only one, but also two or three foreign languages. It also makes the point to say that the United Kingdom and Ireland are falling behind the rest of Europe in their foreign language abilities. This highlights the issues of monolingualism in English-speaking countries. However, it also makes note of a few other countries in Europe that seem to have lower than average results when it comes to how successfully its citizens can speak a foreign language proficiently or fluently. This article was used because it has statistics on not only how many Europeans could hold a conversation in at least one other language, but also two and three other languages. This is important to know to really express the gap because the foreign language abilities between Europeans and Americans (the gap is known due to research about Americans' abilities, which was gathered from other sources); while most Americans can't even speak one foreign language some European can speak at least three. The amount of Americans who can speak one foreign language equals the amount of Europeans who can speak two languages.

Nassra, Omar. "The Benefits of Learning Modern Standard Arabic." London Arabic Tuition.

October 3, 2016. Accessed November 30, 2016.

<http://www.londonarabictuition.com/blog/arabic-language/the-benefits-of-learning-modern-standard-arabic/>.

This article is a listed of detailed and explained reasons as to why someone should learn Arabic. One of the reasons is because the Arabic language is such a global language, what with it being one of the six official languages of the United Nations, the official or co-official language of 16 nations in the Middle East and North Africa and the fifth most spoken language in the world, clocking in with over 255 million native speakers. It also explains that with the expansion of Arab magazines, newspapers, books, films, shows, etc. the world is getting more exposure to the language, which makes it more relevant. This article also describe that many businesses are starting to look to the Middle East and North Africa for opportunities to expand and they are looking for people who are skilled in Arabic. It also makes the point that those who work in business around the world or international relations will be missing out on a lot of information if they don't learn Arabic. This article is valuable because it explains why Arabic is becoming an important language for people all over the world to learn and be proficient in; it does not simply list reasons, it goes deeper and explains those reasons. This was needed for the paper in order to sound convincing enough. However, some of the reasons did not sound compelling enough, so they were not included in the paper.

Nicol, Janet L., and Barss. 2008. "Brain Research". In *Encyclopedia of Bilingual Education*, edited by Josue M. Gonzalez. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

http://dbproxy.lasalle.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sageble/brain_research/0

This encyclopedia entry aims to describe how the brain works in relation to language comprehension, speech and how that operation changes in regards to first and second language comprehension and speech. What was found is that there are similarities as well as significant differences in the between when going between the use of first and second languages. The Wernicke's area in the temporal lobe, which enables people to understand language and speak clearly, remains unchanged and shows the same activity whether someone is using their first language or their second language. On the other hand, the Broca's area in the front cortex, which enables people to speak properly, shows activity in two separate regions, one for the native language and one for the foreign language learned later in life (those who become bilingual at an early age in life use the same region for both languages). It then describes that the Broca's area could also be affected (or unaffected) depending on how one learns a language. This encyclopedia entry is useful because it gives the dynamics of the neuroscience behind using a first and second language and makes the case that the methods used to learn a language matters in regards to how well it is acquired.

Paton, Graeme. "Three Quarters of Adults Cannot Speak A Foreign Language." Telegraph.

November 20, 2013. Accessed November 30, 2016.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10460432/Three-quarters-of-adults-cannot-speak-a-foreign-language.html>.

This article details the lack of foreign language skills that British people have, especially compared to those in the rest of Europe (who have impressive numbers regarding their foreign language abilities). This reports that $\frac{3}{4}$ of British adults cannot hold even a basic conversation in a foreign language. It also lists what the most popular foreign languages in the UK are and highlights the important languages that are not being studied much. It goes on to say that UK teens have the worst foreign language abilities in Europe. The article also tries to give a reason for this issue, by saying that since English was/is such an important language around the world, most English-speakers haven't recognized the need to learn another language. However, it also describes that this sentiment is changing in the UK, at least with those in the government and business realizing that other languages are important and that British people need to be educated in these languages. Though this source does not directly deal with the United States and Americans' issue with foreign languages, it serves a purpose because it points out that monolingualism is a problem with other English-speaking countries. Making this connect (between English dominated societies and monolingualism) is important because it helps to describe why Americans have fallen behind in this area.

Petrovic, John, and Petrovic. 2008. "Critical Period Hypothesis". In Encyclopedia of Bilingual Education, edited by Josue M. Gonzalez. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

http://dbproxy.lasalle.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sageble/critical_period_hypothesis/0

The encyclopedia entry discusses the critical period hypothesis, which describes when the best times to learn a language is. This hypothesis states that for numerous reasons, learning a language at an early age is the best way to do so, both for comprehension and conversation. The reason for this is because children's brains and adult's brains are not structured and do not function the same. This entry suggests that the best time to learn a language is between the ages of 5 and 15, specifically before the individual reaches puberty. This is because there is a decrease in brain plasticity and there is a decrease in the complex concepts, such as language, that the brain can learn; at some point in development, certain brain regions related to language acquisition stop developing and are permanently fixed, making it difficult to learn a complex subject and nearly impossible to grasp it the same way a child could. This encyclopedia entry is useful because it gives information regarding brain science in plain English and describes a key part of the solution to fix the issue of Americans' lack of foreign language skills. This key part is the age at which to start learning a foreign language

Ramirez, Tanish Love, and Roque Planas. "15 Reasons Every American Should Learn Spanish."

The Huffington Post. August 31, 2015. Accessed November 30, 2016.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/tk-reasons-ever-american-should-learn-spanish_us_55d773b5e4b08cd3359c1292.

This article gives 15 reasons why Americans should be taking the time and putting in the effort to learn Spanish. The article talks about how knowing Spanish would first of all, be an advantage to everyday life in the United States, as Spanish is the 2nd most spoken language in the US, with 13% of American speaking the language at home. This helps to point out how common Spanish really is in the US. It then mentions that even though English is the dominant language in the country, because of the large (and growing even larger) Hispanic population, employers are looking for employees who can speak Spanish fluently. This is because employers want people to have the ability to work with the Hispanic community. It also notes that knowing Spanish is particularly important to those in certain professions, such as doctors, lawyers and social workers. The article also says that knowing Spanish allows people to travel to many countries, understand Spanish movies, books and music, and interact with millions of people abroad. This article was helpful in giving some concrete reasons as to why Americans should be learning Spanish, especially because many people in the United States are averse to learning a foreign language, Spanish in particular.

Rao, Ch Srinivasa, and Karayil Suresh Babu. 2016. "Importance of Extensive Reading in Language Learning." *Language In India* 16, no. 2: 251-260. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 8, 2016).

The article gives a very in depth description of the effects of an extensive reading program in language learning, as studied through a British program in Yemen and explains why such a program is so important to language learning. First, it describes all the benefits that extensive reading has on someone's foreign language skills. Among these reasons are that their vocabulary acquisition increases and that they have a better retention rate for information that they read as opposed to language information that they simply repeated from the teacher. In general, this article makes the point that just as reading in one's native language improves native competence, it does the same for foreign language competence. There are no negatives that come with an extensive reading program in language learning, however there are some beginners' difficulties that both teachers and students will have to overcome in order to make the program as successful as possible. These are general difficulties, such as students might not be confident reading large passages as first. The article lists numerous ways for how to counteract these difficulties, such as group activities with the reading and adding appropriate media. This article and study is useful because it provides information for a method of language learning that can be implemented into language learning programs in order to make them more intense and successful.

Rolstad, Kellie. 2008. "English Immersion". In *Encyclopedia of Bilingual Education*, edited by Josue M. Gonzalez. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

http://dbproxy.lasalle.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sageble/english_immersion/0

This encyclopedia entry describes that the best way to learn a language is to immerse oneself in it and explains that this is not simply always speaking in the target language. It talks about the language immersion method on a deeper level, discussing how students need to be taught new things in subjects that aren't related to language (in the target language) for the immersion program to fully work. It also makes mention of different kinds of immersion programs, noting that programs without support will not have a high rate of student success and that it needs to be a full structured program, where many intertwining factors are considered. This entry explains that language immersion programs are not a one size fit all method to teaching a language; it is a long process and takes time for students and teachers figure out methods, activities and linguistic demands that specifically feel right to them. The encyclopedia entry is useful because it makes a very adamant case for language immersion programs and gives numerous reasons for this support and a lot of details about programs.